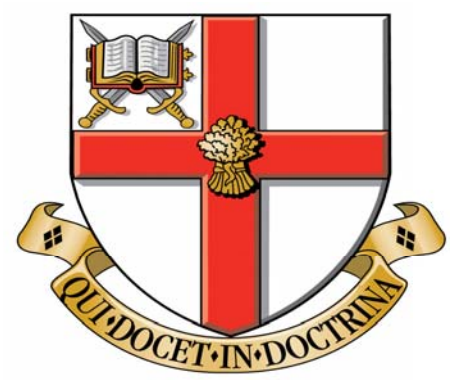

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Abstract

'The Cerebral Rainforest' is a study of the gorilla's considerable influence in literature, culture and science in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. It charts the gorilla's troubled history with mankind and the thinning barriers between the two species – the title refers to the existence of a primal self, buried within in the human brain, which, in some of the works analysed in this dissertation, come to light when faced with gorillas or gorilla-like creatures, ultimately leaving us as wild and exposed as they are. It seeks to establish and understand the image built up around the gorilla during this time, and why it was – and has to some extent remained – a figure all at once terrifying and magnificent, unsettling in its proximity to us. It will engage with evolutionary and racial theories influenced by these animals. The dissertation is therefore divided into three primary chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion, which each deal with a primary focal point – the first chapter; 'Deep Jungle', deals with the initial discovery of the gorilla, Nineteenth Century accounts of hunting, the troubled figure of Paul du Chaillu and all those he influenced. The issues explored in this chapter will lead on to the second; 'A World of Possibility', which will focus on Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century speculative science fiction and fantasy. The third chapter; 'The Inner Ape', will explore the disturbing rise of scientific racism brought about by the breaking down of barriers between animal and human. Ultimately, the dissertation will explore the effect the gorilla had on humanity as a whole – and the unfortunate repercussions this double-edged relationship had on the gorilla.

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The Cerebral Rainforest

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Introduction

Despite being one of our closest living relatives, the gorilla has had an unfortunately chequered history with the human race. Unlike other primates it has shared the kind of reputation usually given to big, mammalian predators; like wolves, bears, and the big cats – a reputation of terrible brutality, of monstrous predation, in the gorilla's case both sexual and apparently for the sheer violence of it – there have been no documented cases of gorillas eating human flesh. There has been only one supposed report of cannibalism – Dian Fossey recorded a small amount of gorilla remains in the faeces of a mother and her daughter in the 1970's, but the '…minute sample left no significant explanation as to where the major portion of the body had disappeared; therefore it could not be definitely concluded that [the gorilla] had been a victim of cannibalism', although Fossey did not completely 'discount the possibility'.[1] No other instances of cannibalism have been reported, seemingly before or since. In fact, a wild gorilla's diet comprises almost entirely of vegetation: 'Gorillas are phytophagous; they eat leaves, sprouts, and the pith of stems (approximately 80% of their diet), and fruits, though the percentage of the constituents varies with location'.[2] They are for all intents and purposes purely herbivorous. So why, then, has the gorilla traditionally faced such fear and revilement?

It is perhaps easy for a Twenty-First Century human being to mock these archaic attitudes, when such a wealth of knowledge and scientific understanding have since illuminated much about the gorilla – although it still faces prejudices today. To the Nineteenth Century human being, the gorilla was a dark uncertainty, a missing link that had emerged from the deep African jungle. Its size and phenomenal power eclipsed anything comic or quaint about it. It remained largely unheard of for centuries at a time, other than

[1] Dian Fossey, *Gorillas in the Mist* (New York: Mariner, 2000) p. 78.
[2] Eman P. Fridman, *Medical Primatology: History, Biological Foundations and Applications* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002) p. 165.

fleeting whispers of hairy men in the unexplored areas of the earth. Due to their habitat of choice; deep jungle, gorillas were often inaccessible even to the people that shared their forests, thus, causing stories and superstitions to build around them – but to Europeans and Americans the creature was largely thought to be sheer fantasy. As early as the Fifth Century, Hanno II of Carthage told stories of savage, hairy men:

> The term 'Gorillae' first appears in a fifth-century report about West Africa by the Carthaginian Hanno the Navigator. His party encountered a group of hairy savages who defended themselves against their pursuers, although the Carthaginians killed and skinned three females and brought their trophies home. This murderous response to other apes characterised human behaviour over the centuries.' [3]

Given that these mysterious and terrifying encounters with degenerated humans was already rumoured, it is hardly surprising that the discovery of the gorilla in Europe and America caused such a stir – here was a beast from myth and legend, from whispers of violent encounters long passed. Much later, in the Sixteenth Century, a stranded English sailor, Andrew Battell, referred to the gorilla as a monster during his stay in the Portuguese colonies, and Thomas Bowditch heard rumours of them in 1819.[4] However, these tales were dismissed at home as imaginative hearsay. The real history of how the gorilla came to the attention of the rest of the world – and the concrete proof of its existence – began in the Nineteenth Century, in 1847:

> Europe and America received confirmation of the long-rumoured existence of the gorilla only in December 1847, when the *Boston Journal of Natural History* published an article by Protestant clergyman, missionary and physician Thomas Staughton Savage and his colleague Jeffries Wyman of Harvard University. Savage had been shown a strange skull in April 1847 in Gabon at the home of his friend Reverend John Leighton Wilson, Senior Missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to West Africa, who told him how it was 'represented by the natives to be that of a monkey-like animal, remarkable for its size, ferocity and habits' (p. 32).

[3] John Sorenson, *Ape* (London: Reaktion, 2009) pp. 43-44. All further references will be given in the main body of the text.
[4] Ted Gott and Kathryn Weir, *Gorilla* (London: Reaktion, 2013) p. 32. All further references will be given in the main body of the text.

America's discovery of the gorilla uncovered something incredibly important for the eventual landscape of human understanding but also, unfortunately, began over a century of revilement and misunderstanding. The discovery of a big, powerful animal, already touted as ferocious, certainly drew the world's attention. Savage and Wyman would have to consider a name befitting such a creature, and turned to the ancient Fifth Century accounts for their title: 'Savage and Wyman chose the name *Gorilla* for their newly described primate from the ancient account of hairy creatures seen by Hanno II of Carthage in the fifth century BC' (p. 33). An appropriate choice perhaps – seemingly the first cohesive reference to gorillas in human history – but an unhappy one. After all, Hanno and his party butchered and skinned three of the female gorillas, understood to be savages by them. The killing and skinning of what Hanno's party perceived to be people makes the encounter seem all the more disturbing – and as John Sorenson suggests, this initial display of violence has since characterised our response to gorillas. This was displayed with particular brutality throughout the latter half of the Nineteenth Century – which saw the gorilla initially as a nightmarish threat to human life, in more ways than one. To understand why the gorilla was treated so mercilessly however, we must first look to the source of European and American understanding – Savage and Wyman's original account.

Chapter One: Deep Jungle

Savage and Wyman's first descriptions of the gorilla were given to the world of science in Boston in 1847, in the *Boston Journal of Natural History.* The account begins methodically, describing the animal's reputation amongst the West African people:

> This animal is known to the natives under the name of Engeena, and is much larger and more ferocious than the Chimpanzee. Its height is above five feet; but it is remarkable for the disproportionate breadth of the shoulders, which is double that of the Chimpanzee. […] The head is longer than that of an ordinary man by two inches […] Its gait is awkward and shuffling, supporting itself on the feet and fingers, and palms of the hands; but not, like the Chimpanzee, resting on the knuckles.[5]

Savage initially focuses on the concrete – the proportions of the animal, the clinical, scientific details, as one might expect from a naturalist. It quickly becomes apparent that the gorilla is much more physically impressive animal than its smaller relative, the chimpanzee. The two are clearly distinct species. It would appear, however, that Savage did not perhaps observe the gorilla's locomotive skills as thoroughly as he might have done – as gorillas, like chimpanzees, use knuckle-walking as their main method of locomotion. There are also occasional hints to observations of a less purely scientific nature – the ferocity is dwelled upon, initially only in relation to the chimpanzee, but further on in the account Savage goes into more detail surrounding the animal's temper – the gorilla is apparently fabled amongst West Africans for being a great threat:

> They are exceedingly ferocious, and objects of terror to the natives, who seldom encounter them except on the defensive. The killing of an Engeena is considered an act of great skill and courage, and brings to the victor signal honour. Its intelligence is said to be inferior to that of the Chimpanzee. (p. 246)

The way Savage phrases this statement is slightly troubling. He emphasises the fear they cause the natives, already placing the animal in a sinister light. The language here suggests

[5] Thomas S. Savage in *The Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History, Volume 2* (Boston: Boston Society of Natural History, 1847) pp. 245 – 246. All further references will be given in the main body of the text.

that the natives meet the gorillas on the defensive, and not the other way around – seeming to imply that gorillas attack humans without provocation. Despite Savage describing the animal's diet as vegetarian, this lends the animal a predatory aspect, though gorilla attacks are reportedly driven by sheer aggression rather than the need to eat. And, as it is supposedly of an inferior mind to the less threatening chimpanzee, the gorilla appears to embody a sort of mindless violence. It is this terrible ferocity that makes the gorilla such a daunting foe, as according to Savage the natives view victory over one an exceptional act. If, in the first tentative scientific account of the gorilla, we already find a testament to the honour of the men who kill them, it is hardly surprising to see this concept ignite the imaginations of so many humans to follow after.

Savage's account also brings to light the essential conundrum that the gorilla represents – a seemingly brutish, violent creature that in some respects, runs dangerously close to ourselves:

> The Orangs are regarded by the natives as degenerated human beings. The Encheeco, or Chimpanzee, being less ferocious, and more intelligent, is supposed to have the spirit of a *Coast-man*, but the Engeena that of a *Bush-man*. Their flesh, when obtained, is eaten by the natives, as well as that of the Chimpanzee. (p. 246)

The notion that the gorillas (referred to here collectively as orang-utans, possibly also encompassing chimpanzees in this term rather than using 'apes') are degenerated human beings is unsettling, not only for the thinning division between animal and man, but also the honour which is attained by the men who kill them – there is routine congratulation for killing what is essentially a close relative. And what follows is even more disturbing – the fact that both gorillas and chimpanzees are frequently eaten by human beings. With the link between beast and relative so uncertain, it is difficult to categorise what the act of eating great apes falls under – whether it should be seen as no different to eating any other animal, seen as taboo, or even more so, as a form of cannibalism.

However, while Savage's account of natives happily eating gorilla and chimpanzee meat may have been true – bush-meat is consumed even today – it seems that in many parts of Central Africa the eating of apes was indeed considered taboo. In the Nineteenth Century the unsettling link between gorillas and humans did not go unnoticed by Africa's native people. In some cases, this was simply due to superstition and storytelling:

> Historical anthropologists Tamara Giles-Vernick and Stephanie Rup record that, according to the oral histories of the Bangando of south-eastern Cameroon, in the nineteenth century, the *dawa* – their term for a group of animals including gorillas, chimpanzees and monkeys – saved Bangando people from an attack by a Ndzimou group, warning of their approach; in gratitude since that time, the Bangando do not eat the meat of gorillas and other *dawa*.[6]

While the refusal to eat primate meat is due to a supposed historical event, shrouded in mythology, there is still a definite respect shown by these actions. There is an implied thankfulness, a kinship there that allows the Bangando to cohabit more peacefully with the apes and monkeys of their forests. However, while the Bangando do not hunt the gorilla due to the tribe's mythology and gratitude, other African peoples appear to largely shun gorilla flesh for different reasons:

> Meder reports that, at least until the last decades of the twentieth century, the Anyang people from near the Cameroon-Nigeria border used to forbid gorilla hunting on pain of death at all times except as part of a ritual when a new chief was required to eat a gorilla's brain and a high-ranking associate its heart. (p. 23)

To punish gorilla hunting with execution is certainly an extreme, but this appears to stem from no moral standpoint. The chief was merely the highest ranking person in the tribe, and thus, with the exception of his chosen, the only one allowed to obtain the gorilla's parts – and traits. This tradition has since dwindled with the rise of other statements of power.[7] There is a long history of humans eating animal parts to gain their qualities, perhaps most famously the Chinese medicine industry where tigers, rhinoceroses and bears are frequently used for parts,

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[6] Gott, Weir, *Gorilla*, p. 23.
[7] Angela Meder, 'Gorillas in African Culture and Medicine' in *Gorilla Journal*, 18 (1999) http://www.berggorilla.org/fileadmin/gorilla-journal/gorilla-journal-18-english.pdf [accessed 11/09/14] p. 3.

but it would appear that the Anyang are just as familiar with this concept on a much smaller scale. Evidently, unlike Savage's assertion that gorillas are of lesser intelligence, the Anyang prize the gorilla's brain even above the heart, which is given to another official. Given that the heart is often the symbol of courage in some cultures, and the organ that would seem to represent the real essence of the animal, it could be viewed as respectful testament as to how highly valued the mind of the gorilla may have been amongst the Anyang. This bestowing of powers upon gorilla organs is not limited however to one particular group – the Fan, depicted in the Nineteenth Century in Paul du Chaillu's *Stories of the Gorilla Country*, discuss the properties of consuming flesh or keeping them as fetishes over the campfire:

> "If we kill a gorilla to-morrow, I should like to have a part of the brain for a fetich [*sic*]. Nothing makes a man so brave as to have a fetich [*sic*] of gorilla's brain. That gives a man a strong heart."
>
> Chorus of those who remained awake—"Yes; that gives a man a strong heart."[8]

So the brain – rather than the heart – grants the keeper courage, giving him an essence of the gorilla, taking from its strength. It is hardly surprising that gorillas – strong, formidable, muscular animals – would command at least a certain level of respect or awe amongst their human neighbours, but there is something about the perceived violence of the animals that lends itself to particularly stereotypical masculine ideals. The fact that many women in African cultures were not allowed to consume gorilla meat[9] solidifies this theory – but in Europe and America the gorilla's masculinity took on a somewhat darker form, as evidenced by a particular piece of artwork by French sculptor Emmanuel Frémiet.

[8] Paul du Chaillu, *Stories of the Gorilla Country* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1871) p. 264. All further references will be given in the main body of the text.
[9] Angela Meder, 'Gorillas in African Culture and Medicine', p. 4.

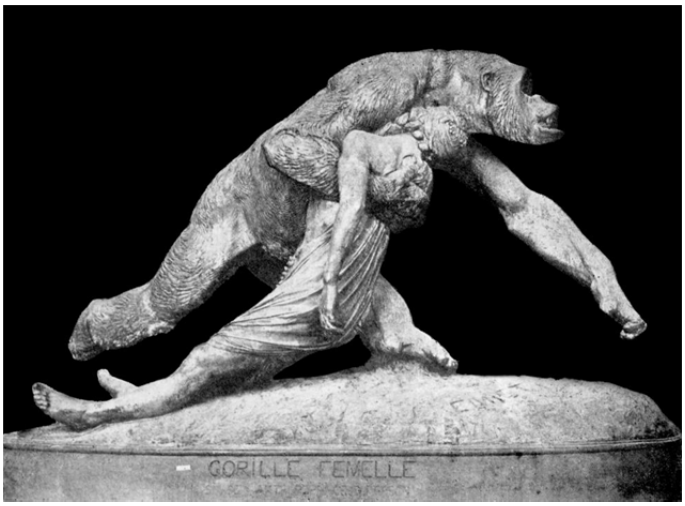


Figure 1: Emmanuel Frémiet, *Gorilla carrying off a Negress*, 1859. Constructed from plaster, greater than life-size (destroyed in 1861). Although modelled on a female gorilla, the animal was frequently misconstrued as male.[10]

Frémiet's sculpture, based on the skeleton and anatomy of a female gorilla, displays a culmination of violence and savagery, a frozen scene in which a gorilla drags away an African woman, slumped in its arms, either dead or unconscious.

> Fremiet's sculpture, which depicted a gorilla dragging an apparently dead African woman off to its lair […] While Fremiet's gorilla was a female, its anatomy and morphology doubtless having been based upon close study of Gauthier Laboulaye's female skeleton, it was read at the time as a male ape, caught in the act of sexual ravishment.' (pp. 40-41).

Although undeniably female in its physiology, the presence of the human woman led the public and critics alike to read the beast as male; caught in a lustful frenzy, dragging the woman away in a suggestion of merciless rape. Its features are set in a fixed, determined gaze, staring ahead at its destination, haunting in its supposed intentions. This image; the gorilla as the embodiment of brute ravishment, raw sexuality, unfortunately stuck, however misconstrued Frémiet's sculpture was. It tied in with an earlier piece of ape fiction to make the gorilla's already fearsome reputation all the more sinister; Edgar Allan Poe's short story, 'Murders at the Rue Morgue'. Although concerning a different species of ape, the orang-utan – the story was published before the discovery of the gorilla in Europe and America was

[10] National Gallery of Victoria, 'Stowed Away: Emmanuel Frémiet's *Gorilla carrying off a woman*' http://publications.ngv.vic.gov.au/artjournal/stowed-away-emmanuel-fremiets-gorilla-carrying-off-a-woman-2/#.VCIOqPldVSE [accessed 12/09/14]

common knowledge – later editions of the story were often tarred with the gorilla's popular savage image, for instance, '…in nineteenth century illustrations of the volume was often depicted more as gorilla than orang-utan […] this is also true of later cinematic adaptations' (p. 41). These adaptations added a brutally sexual element that came with the gorilla's influence (the orang-utan had originally been trying to shave one of the women's faces with a razor, which he had learnt from observing his captor, and in panic at her screams severed the woman's throat). Later illustrations and film adaptations played up the sexual nature of this crime, exaggerating the animal's acts for a lustful crime of masculine passion.

PLATE 24 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'; after a drawing by the Spanish illustrator David Vierge (1851–1904).

Figure 2. *'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' by David Vierge, showing an ape much more gorilla than orang-utan committing the act of murder with a razor blade.*[11]

With such a potent mixture of savagery and strength, the gorilla was already a charismatic target for hunters, but the prospect of its sexual predatory perhaps nullified the last sense of guilt that a Nineteenth Century man might have felt for a supposedly close relative. The Nineteenth Century was, after all, the golden age of hunting: 'White hunters appeared in Central Africa from the 1850s, and by the 1870s and 1880s they had become very nearly a

[11] Deadly Kingdom, 'Poe's Orang-utans Illustrations' http://deadlykingdom.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/poes-orangutans-illustrations.html [accessed 24/08/14]

flood.'[12] This plague of hunters certainly had an impact on the wildlife and landscape. Although white hunters had their own qualms about eating apes and monkeys, often more so than most West Africans, they seldom had as much concern for what their hunting parties ate. For instance, one 'Dugald Campbell supplied his men with monkey meat in the Congo and delighted them with the occasional chimpanzee' (p. 156). Hunters were, after all, not only shooting for sport, but also killing to eat – leading to an extremely high body count. However, the hunter's relationship with the gorilla and other primates was always going to be complicated – despite the horrible reputation it had gathered, the gorilla of imagination and the gorilla in the flesh was a different beast entirely. Hunters thus had conflicted notions concerning the gorilla once they had really encountered them.

Perhaps the most famous and well-read accounts of gorilla hunting in the Nineteenth Century were written by French-American hunter, Paul du Chaillu. His work is rife with contradictions concerning the gorilla – it appears in a great many places to be a monster, a creature justifiably shot and hunted – but, as is often the case in Nineteenth Century accounts, there are a number of allusions to the animal's humanoid aspect, and in places Du Chaillu's narrative cadence appears to confuse the two species. For instance, one chapter in *Stories from the Gorilla Country* in particular, concerning the capture of a live young gorilla, is full of these shifts in narrative. The gorilla is given a name, a distinctly human, anglicised one at that. The contrast between the gorilla and its adoptive name is almost absurd, seeming at once to strip the animal of all its wildness and adding to it a civilised, and somewhat trivial air. However, the name does nothing to tame the animal itself – he remains as wild and violent as ever – so much so that Du Chaillu marvels at his ferocity: 'A fine specimen of man-monkey, thought I; a tiger under the disguise of a gorilla' (p. 197). Joe is given the moniker of man-monkey, which appears to make the evolutionary contradiction even more severe – the gulf

[12] John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 122.

between primate species has been widened with the mention of monkeys, a more distant relative to humanity. It does, however, address the human element of the gorilla – here is an ape with the name of a man, but this is almost immediately quelled with the following comparison to another animal, the tiger. The link to a flesh-eating predator again confuses the gorilla's dietary habits with that of a carnivore. This is re-addressed as the reader is educated on the gorilla's penchant for fruit and vegetation while Du Chaillu attempts to feed the animal, but its temperament never softens – in fact, it appears to get all the more ferocious: 'I never saw such a furious beast in my life as he was. He darted at every one. He bit the bamboos of his cage. He glared at us with venomous and sullen eyes, and in every motion showed a temper thoroughly wicked and malicious' (p. 199). Joe appears to demonstrate an unnatural level of violence – seeming to hold a personal malevolence towards the humans. Du Chaillu seems surprised by this; nowhere does he consider that perhaps the trauma of watching its mother shot before its capture is making the young gorilla particularly aggressive. Instead there is merely a constant and sharp frustration within the passages, as if Du Chaillu is personally affronted by the gorilla's seemingly premeditated acts of violence, and attempts at escape:

> Four of us bore him again struggling into the village. This time I would not trust him to the cage, but fastened a small chain round his neck. This operation he resisted with all his might, and it took us quite an hour to securely chain the little fellow, whose strength was something marvellous. (p. 201)

This update in security would appear to strike a nerve – du Chaillu suggests that he cannot 'trust' the gorilla. This is not an animal's natural instincts to escape, nor is it the effect of a traumatised 'child', but instead du Chaillu discusses Joe like a strange, unruly mix between the two, part beast, part infant. This casts an even more disturbing light upon the chain that du Chaillu fashions around the gorilla's neck, its distress during the procedure particularly evident. It is not surprising, then, that this level of stress takes its toll:

> Ten days after he was thus chained he died quite suddenly. He had been in good health, and ate plentifully of his natural food, which was brought every day from the forest for him. He did not seem to sicken until two days before his death. He died in some pain. (p. 201)

Joe is reportedly perfectly healthy before his untimely demise – eating well, and of his natural diet no less. A young, healthy gorilla dying in pain is evidently not a natural cause. Stress in captive gorillas can have a huge impact on health – for instance, it is rumoured to cause heart disease in middle-aged male gorillas in captivity even today,[13] amongst fairly sophisticated establishments with a much fuller understanding of gorilla behaviour, diet and psychological needs. Therefore, in these primitive initial imprisonments, gorilla suffering was greatly magnified due to the ignorance of their captors. Although du Chaillu was a pioneer of sorts and noted some valuable behavioural attributes, his blurring of human and animal boundaries and lack of understanding led Joe to suffer and ultimately pass away. For instance, du Chaillu seems to regard Joe's final acts as premeditated and personal – he appears affronted by the gorilla's behaviour, almost expecting it to know better – its actions are described as 'treachery' and this is but one of its 'vices', which would seem to imply a corruptibility surrounding the ape, capable of civilised actions but simply choosing to rebel. There is also a definite feral cunning displayed by the animal, a penchant for duplicity, and a deep desire to inflict revenge on his captors:

> To the last he continued utterly untamable [*sic*], and after his chain was put on he added treachery to his other vices. He would come sometimes quite readily to eat out of my hand, but while I stood by him would suddenly – looking me all the time in the face to keep my attention – put out his foot and grasp at my leg. Several times he tore my pantaloons in this manner. A quick retreat on my part saved my legs from farther injury, but I had to be very careful in my approaches. (p. 201).

It appears that du Chaillu had a troubled relationship with his quarry. When hunting apes his passages range from sympathetic to utterly uncaring. It appears he was not quite sure himself

[13] Cheryl Lyn Dybas, 'Success Beats in the Heart of a Captive Gorilla' in *The Washington Post Online:* http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/20/AR2006082000478.html [accessed 31/07/2014]

how to view the gorilla. Another passage in particular evokes the seemingly gentler side of du Chaillu's character – in his second attempt to capture a live gorilla, after the unfortunate Joe. Upon discovering a mother and baby deep within the forest, du Chaillu paints an idyllic picture – which is almost immediately shattered:

> We were walking along in silence, when I heard a cry, and presently I saw not far from me, in the midst of a dense foliage, a female gorilla, with a tiny baby gorilla hanging to her breast. The mother was stroking the little one, and looking fondly down at it; and the scene was so pretty and touching that I withheld my fire and considered (like a soft-hearted fellow) whether I had not better leave them in peace. Before I could make up my mind, however, my hunter fired and killed the mother, who fell dead without a struggle. (p. 251)

Here du Chaillu presents himself as a compassionate figure, touched by the delicate scene unfolding before him. His hesitation seems to display empathy with the animals, rather than the usual mixture of fascination, revulsion and fear. Here the line between human and animal is blurred, but not in a threatening way – the scene is merely a universal one, of parenthood and of tender infancy, easily empathetic, even for the most hardened hunter. Therefore du Chaillu, taken aback by this fragile snapshot into the life of the gorilla, absolves himself of the blame, when one of his hired Africans breaks the scene apart with casual destruction:

> The mother fell, but the baby clung to her, and, with piteous cries, endeavoured to attract her attention. I came up, and when it saw me it hid its poor little head in its mother's breast. It could neither walk nor bite, it was such a tiny little baby gorilla. We could easily manage it; and I carried it, while the men bore the mother on a pole. (p. 251)

Even in the event of the mother's sudden death the baby clings on still, displaying the kind of maternal connection that would resonate with both adult and adolescent readers (the intended audience of *Stories of the Gorilla Country*). The use of words like 'poor' and various adjectives intended to emphasise how small and vulnerable the animal is, reiterate not only the delicacy of infancy, in stark contrast to the brutal strength of the adult gorillas, but also du Chaillu's pity for the little creature. The mother is now, to the men, nothing more than meat, to be trussed and carried back to camp – whilst du Chaillu, embodying the more tender aspect

of the hunter, carries the baby himself, almost as a surrogate mother. However, the baby's bond with his mother appears to be inseparable, even after her death:

> When we got to the village another scene ensued. The men put the body down, and I set the little fellow near. As soon as he saw his mother he crawled to her, and threw himself on her breast He did not find his accustomed nourishment, and perceived that something was the matter with his mother. He crawled over her body, smelt at it, and gave utterance from time to time to a plaintive cry, "hoo, hoo, hoo," which touched my heart. (p. 251)

The touching nature of this scene is again not lost on du Chaillu. The connection between the mother and baby seems to transcend the boundaries between what is considered animal, an instinctive bond. While the connection is not exactly a human one, rather, one shared by many mammals, it does create a sort of solidarity between species and allows the reader to empathise with the gorilla, albeit briefly. The infant's utter dependence on its mother is ultimately its undoing, as du Chaillu rather succinctly summarises at the end of the chapter: 'I could get no milk for this poor little fellow. He could not eat, and consequently he died on the third day after he was caught.' (p. 251). The baby gorilla, the subject of an entire chapter and supposedly one that du Chaillu was touched by, is cleared away in a single sentence – regrettably short, much like the life of the baby itself.

His third encounter with a juvenile gorilla is much more condensed. This one, evidently older and more formidable than the last, appears to have a little more in common with Joe than the baby – and in turn, worthy of much less sympathy in the eyes of du Chaillu. In the passage he details the same sort of approach – discovering a mother and baby in the foliage – but there is none of the hesitation and remorse displayed earlier:

> The poor mother lay there in her gore, but the little fellow was off in the woods; so we concealed ourselves hard by to wait for its return. Presently it came up, jumped on its mother, and began sucking at her breasts and fondling her. Then Etia, Gambo, and I rushed upon it. Though evidently less than two years old, it proved very strong, and escaped from us. But we gave chase, and in a few minutes had it fast, not, however, before one of the men had his arm severely bitten by the savage little beast. (p. 265)

Other than the use of the word ‘poor’, du Chaillu appears to show little sympathy for the situation – even when the infant is trying to draw milk from her dead mother’s breast. The hunters in fact use this maternal bond to lure the animal back, rushing it as soon as it’s distracted – a particularly cold and calculating method of capture. Again, the language has shifted to a more alienating form – the gorilla is called savage, and a beast, rather than a vulnerable young infant like the last captured gorilla. Unsurprisingly the captive follows the other two juveniles to an early grave: ‘It proved to be a young female. Unhappily, she lived but ten days after capture. She persistently refused to eat any cooked food, or any thing else except the nuts and berries which they eat in the forest.’ (p. 265). Despite a return to the less sentimental, du Chaillu still attempts to civilise the gorillas by trying to feed them cooked food – seeming to scorn the gorilla’s natural diet. Other than a general lack of understanding towards the gorilla’s digestive needs, du Chaillu’s lack of care towards his captives can possibly be attributed to their naturally defensive behaviour, which, like it did with Joe, seems to irk du Chaillu tremendously:

> She was not so ferocious as "Fighting Joe," but was quite as treacherous and quite as untamable [*sic*]. She permitted no one to approach her without trying to bite. Her eyes seemed somewhat milder than Joe's, but had the same gloomy and treacherous look, and she had the same way as Joe of looking you straight in the eyes when she was meditating an attack. (p. 265)

However, this treacherousness that du Chaillu details is tinged with a deeper intelligence, a cunning in the art of self-defence. Unlike Savage’s summary of the gorilla, the animals appear to show considerable intellect when captured:

> I remarked in her also the same manœuvre practiced by the other when she wished to seize something—my leg, for instance, which, by reason of the chain around her neck, she could not reach with her arm. She would look me straight in the face, then quick as a flash would throw her body on one leg and one arm, and reach out with the other leg. Several times I had narrow escapes from the grip of her strong big toe. I thought sometimes that when she looked at me she appeared cross-eyed, but of this I could not make certain. All her motions were remarkably quick, and her strength was very great, though she was so small. (p. 265)

Although Savage reports the chimpanzee to be the more intelligent of the apes, and this may be the case, the gorillas here show no shortage of intellect – and the fact that both Joe and the female infant display the same kinds of intelligent defensive behaviour proves that both cases were not isolated incidents, and that even young gorillas are capable of using decision making behaviours when necessary. Even though du Chaillu's irritation is clear, the ingenuity of the animals cannot be ignored. The small gorillas might have been strong and vicious at times, but they were little threat in comparison to the adults, which du Chaillu seldom found any compassionate link with, other than a sort of dread and awe. In particular, one male featured in *Stories of the Gorilla Country* is described in particularly violent detail – the account, from the very beginning, is full of descriptive drama:

> Suddenly an immense gorilla advanced out of the wood straight toward us, and gave vent, as he came up, to a terrible howl of rage, as much as to say, "I am tired of being pursued, and will face you."
>
> It was a lone male, the kind which are always most ferocious. This fellow made the woods resound with his roar, which is really an awful sound, resembling very much the rolling and muttering of distant thunder. (p. 275).

Here the gorilla is humanised, in his perceived anger and fatigue at being hunted, and is shown to make a conscientious decision in facing the hunters. However, the gorilla is also made more terrible than human – almost deified – with the power to make the entire forest resound with his rage. It is pertinent to remember that du Chaillu re-wrote this tale for children, which perhaps explains some of the colourfulness of his imagery, but the language and the violence to follow never seems to be diminished for his adolescent audience. In fact, if anything the spectacle of the male gorilla appears to be a portrait of inflated aggression, perhaps an attempt to shock and frighten his young audience as if it were a ghost story:

> The gorilla looked at us for a minute or so out of his evil gray eyes, then beat his breast with his gigantic arms—and what arms he had!—then he gave another howl of defiance, and advanced upon us. How horrible he looked! I shall never forget it. (p. 275).

Everything about the gorilla appears to be tainted with aspects of the demonic; evil eyes, terrible howling, and a horrifying aspect. Here du Chaillu does document chest beating – a natural defensive mechanism designed to relieve stress and intimidate rivals and potential threats – but it seems like much of the gorilla's behaviour is misconstrued. It is seen to make a slow, deliberate and menacing approach, becoming a little more horrifying each time it gets closer:

> Again the gorilla made an advance upon us. Now he was not twelve yards off. I could see plainly his ferocious face. It was distorted with rage; his huge teeth were ground against each other, so that we could hear the sound; the skin of the forehead was drawn forward and back rapidly, which made his hair move up and down, and gave a truly devilish expression to the hideous face. Once more he gave out a roar, which seemed to shake the woods like thunder; I could really feel the earth trembling under my feet. The gorilla, looking us in the eyes, and beating his breast, advanced again. (pp. 275-276).

Stories of the Gorilla Country ramps up the initial tension found in the supposedly completely factual *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa.* After all, one was aimed at a young audience, the other aimed at du Chaillu's peers and the adult general public. This is not to say that the original account of this gorilla's demise is much less dramatic – but the gorilla's determined march is diminished; although the gorilla advances in short bursts it is to intimidate the hunter in a defensive manner, rather than a slow and steady assault – as one of du Chaillu's guides warns in the passage meant for younger readers: '"Don't fire too soon," said Malaouen; "if you do not kill him, he will kill you."' (p. 276). This sets du Chaillu up as a man forced into killing the gorilla rather than a man who has deliberately tracked it through the forest. Interestingly the description in *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* is devoid of the African's words of advice – rather it appears he and his comrades wait in tense silence before du Chaillu pulls the trigger. It seems, then, that Malaouen is merely a narrative aid, a devise used to increase the fear and excitement of his younger readers – and his words perhaps used to cushion du Chaillu's violent intentions in an aura of danger and desperation – kill or be killed. The original account is far more blunt, and the gorilla's death

is present, rather than it merely falling to the earth. It requires an adult mind, and a colder one than a child possesses, to appreciate the clinical nature of du Chaillu's kill. There is no need for excuses in this passage, no need to create any extra sense of threat, instead du Chaillu coolly remarks upon the semi-humanoid nature of the beast's dying moments:

> With a groan which had something terrible human in it, and yet was full of brutishness, he fell forward on his face. The body shook convulsively for a few minutes, the limbs moved about in a struggling way, and then all was quiet – death had done its work.[14]

While du Chaillu acknowledges the human nature of the animal's pain, there is little compassion or confusion here. The gorilla dies without his remorse, there is none of the confliction that du Chaillu displays in *Stories of the Gorilla Country*. However, with such a rich font of description in both texts, it is hardly surprising that tales such as these would influence other authors.

Published in 1861, the same year as *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, Scottish author Robert Michael Ballantyne's *The Gorilla Hunters* takes heavily from du Chaillu's original account (*Stories of the Gorilla Country* was not published until 1871), and brought a fictional flair to the prospect of gorilla hunting, something that du Chaillu was criticised for. The difference between the two works is marked only by Ballantyne's undisguised fiction, displaying characters who treat the gorilla more as a mythical entity than an ape. Indeed, it was du Chaillu's works that prompted the very creation of the book:

> The immediate success of du Chaillu's book had prompted the publisher T. Nelson and Sons to ask Robert Michael Ballantyne – a well-known author of adventure stories for boys – to write a book on the subject; he was promised £80 should the book be completed in time for the Christmas sales – that is, in less than six months.[15]

Hardly surprising, then, that the book was published so soon after du Chaillu's original account – it was always meant to capitalise on his success. However, the bulk of Ballantyne's

[14] Paul du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (London: John Murray,1861) p. 71.
[15] Jochen Petzold, "How like us is that ugly brute, the ape!' Darwin's 'Ape Theory' and Its Traces in Victorian Children's Magazines' in *Reflecting on Darwin*, eds. Eckhart Voights, Monika Pietrzak-Franger, Barbara Schaff (Farnam: Ashgate, 2014) p. 62.

descriptive splendour concerning the gorilla is ripped straight from du Chaillu's accounts - almost word for word in some cases. The influence is undeniable. For instance, the account of the male gorilla, before it is shot: 'Nearly six feet high (he proved four inches shorter), with immense body, huge chest, and great muscular arms, with fiercely-glaring large deep gray eyes, and a hellish expression of face, which seemed to me like some nightmare vision' (p. 70). Here du Chaillu certainly does justice to his perceived horror of the gorilla's display of aggression – but Ballantyne's character's encounter with their first gorilla appears to fall just short of a slightly more dramatic re-write:

> Of all the hideous creatures I have ever seen or heard of, none came up in the least degree to this. Apart altogether from its gigantic size, this monster was calculated to strike terror into the hearts of the beholders simply by the expression of its visage, which was quite satanic. I could scarcely persuade myself that I was awake! It seemed as if I were gazing on one of those hideous creatures one beholds when oppressed with night-mare! (p. 118).

Ballantyne increases the horror and tension of du Chaillu's account by exaggerating the hellish qualities of the gorilla and its size, no concrete figure given just yet, is inflated to terrifying proportions. Both narrators confess to find the sight nightmarish. The backbone of the narrative is, however, the same – and this is often the case in Ballantyne's novel. However, it does differ in some respects – the narrator only forms one of the protagonists, of which there are three British men, Ralph, Jack and Peterkin, who have come to Africa to hunt the gorilla – if it even exists, which is discussed with doubt in the beginning of the novel. Where du Chaillu throws himself into hunting with the Fan tribe, there is a safety net of civility surrounding Ballantyne's protagonists, and although they seek help from Africans on occasion, they are either savage or clownish.

Ballantyne's does engage on a somewhat deeper level with the potent combination of guilt and blood-lust displayed by du Chaillu, however. The novels narrator is a little more sensitive than du Chaillu's account, and often struggles with the gorilla's resemblance to

mankind, even more so than du Chaillu's conflicted view. His first encounter with the gorilla, although horrific and a violent affair, is not without its touch of humanity. After the gorilla is dead, and no longer a physical threat, Ralph studies the corpse and finds it somewhat haunting:

> The body of this brute was covered with grey hair, but the chest was bare and covered with tough skin, and its face was intensely black. I shuddered as I looked upon it, for there was something terribly human-like about it, despite the brutishness of its aspect (p. 119).

Although thoroughly unsettled by the monstrous visage of the gorilla, he acknowledges its semi-human qualities. There is an intense guilt felt by him, tinged by an uncomfortable sense of excitement:

> 'Pity at first predominated in my heart, then I felt like an accomplice to a murder, and then an exulting sensation of joy at having obtained a specimen of one of the rarest animals in the world overwhelmed every other feeling.' (pp. 118).

Ralph initially displays a sense of compassion not displayed by du Chaillu – although he has twinges of guilt, he never considers himself a murderer. Ralph's guilt as a witness compels him to lament the death of the gorilla – but his grim scientific lust to study a specimen of such an elusive animal eventually wins out. There is a hunger to learn about Ralph that forms a troubling image – 'his attention to a freshly killed specimen assumed a more visceral character, more akin to a butcher's interest in meat'.[16] This is somewhat grimly demonstrated by Jack's joke about Ralph's reluctance to leave a carcass: 'I see there is no chance of getting him away from his beloved gorilla till he has torn its skin from its flesh, and its flesh from its bones.' (p. 119) Ralph's conflicted emotions are perfectly summarised by Jack's jocular statement; he is torn between the cold and clinical dissection of the natural scientist and yet, the gorilla is still 'beloved' to him – used sarcastically by Jack of course, but suggesting of a deeper connection than just a scientist and an interesting carcass. This is not the only time

[16]John Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body: Violence, Identity and Ecology in Victorian Adventure Fiction* (London: Anthem Press, 2012) p. 133.

Ralph's emotions are worked on by his fellow primates. Later, when hunting a group of gorillas in the forest, Ralph watches the ape family flee before the volley of gunshots – sometimes, fleetingly, on their hind legs: '…I was particularly struck with their grotesque yet strong resemblance to man, and I do not think that I could at that time have prevailed upon myself to fire at them. I should have felt like a murderer' (p. 128). Again Ralph denounces shooting gorillas as murder; the act of killing another human. There might be many differences between the two species and the likeness may in fact be 'grotesque', but as Ralph also admits, it is strong – and ultimately inescapable. Ralph even laments on the similarity between the smaller primates, the monkeys, and humans: 'I never could bear to shoot monkeys. There was something so terribly human-like in their sufferings, that I never could witness the death of one without feeling an almost irresistible inclination to weep' (p. 122). The humanoid throws of agony that distort the features of our relatives when shot proves so disturbing to Ralph that it pricks at his deepest emotions. Despite being a naturalist, he is moved – even the urge to study the gorilla's corpse is overshadowed by the closeness he sees between human and animal in the primate family. His squeamishness concerning monkeys is reflected by du Chaillu's own unsettling statement regarding eating their flesh: 'I generally abominate monkey, which, roasted, looks too much like roast-baby' (p. 56). Both are forced to consume monkey flesh in times of desperation, although neither relish the thought of it.

These anxieties concerning the proximity of humans and other primates is echoed jocularly by Peterkin in the novel's beginning – foreshadowing the unsettling bonds between man, ape and monkey that they will encounter: "…There's no change in us—except, indeed, that Jack has become a gorilla." / "Ay, and you a monkey," retorted Jack" (p. 32). Although a casual joke between two friends, the exchange has weight concerning the effect the wilderness and their wild relatives can have on them – it appears as though Jack and Peterkin may already be reverting to lower forms of primate, devolving. This particular fear – the

prospect of humanity devolving, or the partitions between ape and man becoming totally broken, became a staple in later genres. The disturbing closeness between humanity and animal haunted the people of the Nineteenth Century, who struggled to come to terms with such a shattering possibility. If any statement best reflects the overall Nineteenth Century standpoint towards the gorilla it is one by Norman Macleod, a Scottish clergyman and author, in his monthly magazine publication *Good Words*, the 1861 issue. His section concerning 'The Gorilla' particularly highlights the profound sense of unease that was felt by both academics and the general public in that century:

> It is to be hoped that the gorilla will, before long, be classed among the species that have become extinct; for although we very emphatically deny that he is 'a man and a brother,' it would be pleasant to have his claims upon us moved as fast as possible.[17]

Macleod's particularly harsh statement suggests that the gorilla should be wiped from the face of the earth for human convenience, just another unsettling but ultimately obsolete reminder of the past. However, in the statement there is a hint of admission – Macleod stresses that he denies any hint of relation to the primates, but suggests that these claims would be better put to rest as quickly as possible, suggesting at least a fear, a suggestion, that there may be a grain of truth in the accusation – after all, if there was no doubt involved concerning the gorilla's shared qualities with mankind, we might not have found them so initially terrifying. Like it or not, the conclusion that gorillas and mankind share ancestry struck a nerve with an already twitching establishment – whether in favour, or against, it was something too complex and challenging to be ignored. It is perhaps this quandary that justified the continued hunting of the gorilla – not just so that bodies could be collected for scientific study, but also almost a systematic attempt at eradicating an ethical problem. With the gorilla gone, the world may have seemed a less disturbing place for the Nineteenth Century public. After all, the gorilla opened the door to numerous possibilities in the

[17] Norman Macleod, 'The Gorilla', in *Good Words for 1861*, ed. Norman Macleod (Edinburgh: Alexander Strahan and Co, 1861) p. 468.

Nineteenth Century consciousness. If the gorilla exists – an unsettling ape reminiscent of mankind – could there be other creatures, closer to us still, horrible parodies of the human race, still at large? If humanity evolved from similar ancestors to these apes, what could that mean for the future of our species? Is devolution possible, as Ballantyne's character's little joke implies? These are all questions that have set fire to author's imaginations – and during the Nineteenth Century, some texts in particular display these anxieties at large, in grand, speculative situations and alternative histories.

Chapter Two: A World of Possibility

H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, published in 1895, explores the possibility of time travel to the distant future. However, Wells does not picture a technological utopia, as is often found in the genre – there is no great evolutionary or technological leap here – in fact, quite the opposite. Well's story serves as a dark warning to the possibilities of the human future, an alien world where the familiar Nineteenth Century culture has disappeared. These anxieties are presented to us when the Time Traveller touches down in future London, AD 802,701. He at first fears that he may be viewed as something primitive in the eyes of whatever culture has evolved around him:

> What might not have happened to men? What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if in this interval the race had lost its manliness and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? I might seem some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness—a foul creature to be incontinently slain.[18]

The Time Traveller experiences a disturbing revelation – the possibility that humanity may have devolved into something cruel and vicious – something quite simply inhuman. But his doubts are double-edged. Not only is he concerned about encountering monsters, he is afraid of being seen as one. After all, if the human race has evolved to a new level of sophistication and eloquence then the Nineteenth Century man may appear to them as a prehistoric man to us – shockingly primitive, and yet, far too close for comfort. The Time Traveller fears the same kind of treatment that the gorilla received at the hands of men – hunted for their proximity to us, reviled for their hybrid looks.

However, the Time Traveller need not be so concerned in this respect – the human race has not evolved to great heights in Wells's future. Rather they have slid back into

[18] H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (London, Penguin Classics, 2005) p. 22. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

something more primitive. The effete Eloi are the first race of humans the Time Traveller encounters – delicate, beautiful people, soft and displaying little sexual dimorphism. They are a peaceful vegetarian race, to the point of being defenceless. They trust the much larger Time Traveller easily enough, despite his intimidating stature. As the time traveller explores this new world he realises that the Eloi are in fact descended from England's wealthy upper classes – who have become so small and defenceless as a result of no need for hardship that they have indeed 'lost their manliness'. However, as effeminate as the race may be, and as backward as the Time Traveller may consider them, they still function as a society, living in peaceful tribes without the need of domestic animals, which appear to have vanished entirely, and living a seemingly care-free existence during the day. However, they do display a worrying fear of the dark – which is not as irrational as it may first appear. After all, if the wealthy elite have devolved into vulnerable little tribes, unaccustomed to hardship even now, then what might have happened to the lower classes? The answer is something much worse. There are subtle hints lain throughout the passages that imply the Time Traveller and the Eloi are not alone in their paradise – as the Time Traveller finds to his cost after the Time Machine is stolen from him.

Automatically blaming the Eloi, he fails to take in the flashes of sickly white animals, and the ghostly laughter coming from inside the podium. Although initially mistaking one for a fleeing deer and the other as the sound of a distant stream, the Time Traveller does catch more a concrete glimpse – which introduces the ape-like qualities of the Morlocks that make them so unsettling.

> I saw white figures. Twice I fancied I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running rather quickly up the hill, and once near the ruins I saw a leash of them carrying some dark body. They moved hastily. I did not see what became of them. (p. 44)

Although this sight is fleeting, there are already disturbing hints towards the violent nature of the Morlocks – they are sighted carrying some sort of body, presumably an Eloi. But this is

only a hint of what is to come – the Time Traveller does eventually come face to face with what was once earth's lower classes – now warped beyond recognition. Encountering a pair of eyes in the darkness, the Time Traveller encounters something primeval – not so much the Morlock, but a reaction within himself:

> The old instinctive dread of wild beasts came upon me. I clenched my hands and steadfastly looked into the glaring eyeballs. I was afraid to turn. Then the thought of the absolute security in which humanity appeared to be living came to my mind. And then I remembered that strange terror of the dark. (p. 45)

Humans often exhibit a fear of the dark – a very common phobia. In Wells's new world the surviving Eloi still do – because of the Morlocks. They have become a nightmare, a creature so disturbingly like us – because they've evolved from us – and yet something entirely alien, that has become adapted to subterranean life. Even worse, they use the cover of darkness to hunt the Eloi – and eventually, the Time Traveller. This encounter in the catacombs of London sparks something ancestral in the man, at first, a crippling sort of fear – but also a realisation. The Time Traveller now fully understands the state of humanity:

> …Man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the Upper-world were not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages (p.46).

The Time Traveller's dread reveals the truth about this new world – there is no advancement here, however pristine the Eloi appear to be – they have become weak, and the Morlocks unrecognisable in their devolution. This bleak reality is not what the Time Traveller envisioned for humanity – and it serves as a dark warning for late Victorian society, of a class division so strong that it creates separate species. Although the Time Traveller is not the vile throw-back that he imagined he might seem, he has encountered such a creature and the future of mankind is made all the more horrible for it. For all the Time Traveller's supposed superiority over both species of future human though, there are unsettling hints as to his own nature – perhaps he is not as civilised as he seems:

> The divided castes of Victorian society slide down the slope in their different ways to produce two separate species, the effete Eloi and the brutish Morlocks. […] The time traveller himself also gives hints of untrustworthiness; his brutish behaviour and demands for meat ally him unpleasantly with the Morlocks.[19]

So the Time Traveller goes through his own sort of descent into savagery – the very nature of the future humans warps his own – the vulnerability of the Eloi and the predatory nature and ugliness of the Morlocks. For instance, when the Time Traveller first encounters the Eloi, one of his first thoughts is one of violence – disturbing considering the unthreatening nature of the little people: 'Indeed, there was something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence—a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease. And besides, they looked so frail that I could fancy myself flinging the whole dozen of them about like nine-pins' (p. 24). While comforted by their weakness, the Time Traveller shows a brief flash of pure aggression – revelling in how easy it would be to cause immense damage to the child-like people. If the Eloi uncover a darker side to the Time Traveller, the Morlocks go one step further – he is utterly repulsed by them, and without sympathy: 'And I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing ones own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things' (p. 67). The corruptive influence of the Morlocks has taken its toll on the Time Traveller – turning him into a brute of sorts, forced to actively suppress his violent desires. Ultimately, the presence of these primitive humans serve to amplify the Time Traveller's inner beast, the predatory and territorial urges of an animal. There is a disturbing blood-lust here, and this isn't something unique to the Time Traveller – later, another Victorian author would write a similar clash of humans with the primitive, and unearthed violent desires, although it would be set not in the future, but in the contemporary present.

Published at the turn of the Twentieth Century, Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* exhibits the embodiment of Nineteenth Century fears; the possibility that something closer to

[19] Charlotte Sleigh, *Literature and Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp. 142-143.

us even than the gorilla could exist, exposing both fears of our ancestry and the possibility of devolution – after all, the ape-men exist in the same time period and location as the plateau's modern indigenous humans, which they frequently battle with. The inclusion of dinosaurs and other prehistoric life, all mixed together with humans and ape-men alike, strengthens the sense of past and present coming together in a violent new habitat. The division between human and ape in this novel is intentionally blurred – humans and ape-men are frequently doubled, disturbing doppelgangers of each other. For example, the narrator, E.D. Malone, at one point climbs a tree to gain a vantage point of the rainforest – a rather simian activity in itself – only to come face to face with his own nightmarish double:

> A face was gazing into mine—at the distance of only a foot or two. The creature that owned it had been crouching behind the parasite, and had looked round it at the same instant that I did. It was a human face—or at least it was far more human than any monkey's that I have ever seen. It was long, whitish, and blotched with pimples, the nose flattened, and the lower jaw projecting, with a bristle of coarse whiskers round the chin. The eyes, which were under thick and heavy brows, were bestial and ferocious, and as it opened its mouth to snarl what sounded like a curse at me I observed that it had curved, sharp canine teeth. For an instant I read hatred and menace in the evil eyes. Then, as quick as a flash, came an expression of overpowering fear. There was a crash of broken boughs as it dived wildly down into the tangle of green. I caught a glimpse of a hairy body like that of a reddish pig, and then it was gone amid a swirl of leaves and branches.[20]

The ape-man, to Malone, presents a dark reflection of himself, a mirror image distorted by savagery. The face, after all, is essentially human – and unlike the gorillas of Ballantyne, there is no blackness here, but rather pallor. Like Wells's Morlocks, the ape-men of *The Lost World* seem a little closer to the white man, and thus, to the European reader, more threatening and disturbing. Conan Doyle's ape-man is a chimera of sorts – man, ape, monkey, with a few pig-like qualities to add an extra dose of ugliness. Outwardly a hideous parody of humanity, the ape-men share the same 'evil eyes' of the gorillas of du Chaillu and Ballantyne, but their red hair places them also with the Asian orang-utan, already presented to

[20] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World* (London: Penguin, 2007) pp. 161 – 162. All further references will be given in the main body of the text.

the Nineteenth Century as a killer of women in Edgar Allen Poe's 'Murders in the Rue Morgue'. The combined influence of these two apes, mixed with a melting pot of human and bestial traits, makes for a deeply unsettling creature in Conan Doyle's works. However, they are not entirely without sympathy – albeit fleetingly. The beast soon makes its escape after an initial display of ferocity, fleeing in terror. Although this flight could very well be the natural panic of an animal, blind fear, the fact that Malone sees the change in the ape-man's eyes occur suggests more of a connection than Malone would like. To be able to witness such a split-second change in emotion suggests common or shared facial expressions and real intellect.

Upon hearing about the ape-man, Professor Challenger, always practical, begins by ruling out the New World monkeys present in the area:

> 'In South America there are, if my memory serves me […] some thirty-six species of monkeys, but the anthropoid ape is unknown. It is clear, however, that he exists in this country, and that he is not the hairy, gorilla-like variety, which is never seen it of Africa or the East' (pp. 164-165)

These animals were in the process of being studied and separated from the Old World monkeys in the Nineteenth Century, in one case Charles Waterton, one of du Chaillu's detractors, the knowledge of which he attempted to use to discredit du Chaillu, by insisting that gorillas must move agilely through the canopy as New World monkeys do – ignoring the fact that the monkeys are not only a different class of primate but that they exhibit a prehensile tail specifically for this purpose, while the gorilla does not. Challenger gives his nod to the gorilla, but decides that this must be something entirely different; the Americas have no ape species other than humans and the gorilla is never found outside of Africa. Other apes are confined to Africa or Asia, and no-where else in the wild. Although Conan-Doyle's plateau is a zoological melting pot, hurling dinosaurs of different periods together with extinct mammals and hypothetical ones like the ape-men, there is at least a competent

understanding of contemporary zoology. Challenger, instead of being alarmed at the possibility of a an ape-man's existence, appears extremely logical and measured – there is a lack of excitement, just a steely scientific mind working through the information he has received and deciding resolutely that they must study these creatures and find out more:

> 'This is a whiskered and colourless type, the latter characteristic pointing to the fact that he spends his days in arboreal seclusion. The question which we have to face is whether he approaches more closely to the ape or the man. In the latter case, he may well approximate to what the vulgar have called the 'missing link'. The solution of this problem is our immediate duty.' (p. 165)

Challenger appears to display a fairly sophisticated understanding of primate evolution here – and natural mutations. However, he displays a surprising sort of sympathy with the idea of the creatures, marking the idea of a 'missing link' as vulgar, implying that these ape-men, if they exist, are a species in their own right whether or not they range closer to apes or humans, not simply a transitory, freakish phase. There is also a nod to the backlash after Darwin's theories and the age of the gorilla here – hardly surprising from a man who lived through the Nineteenth Century – including a brief interjection by Malone, who playfully recalls the mixture of doubt and parody of that age: 'I was inclined to interpolate, as I looked at him, that I had seen his first cousin in Kensington' (p. 165). This not only refers to Challenger's ape-like qualities, which are parodied later in the story, but on a more general scale the kind of satire present in the Nineteenth Century concerning Darwin's theory and our ape relatives – publications like *Punch* were awash with images of hybrid ape-men, sentient gorillas and even Darwin himself, numerously depicted as an ape-man, his heavy brow, balding crown and beard giving ammunition to the ridicule.

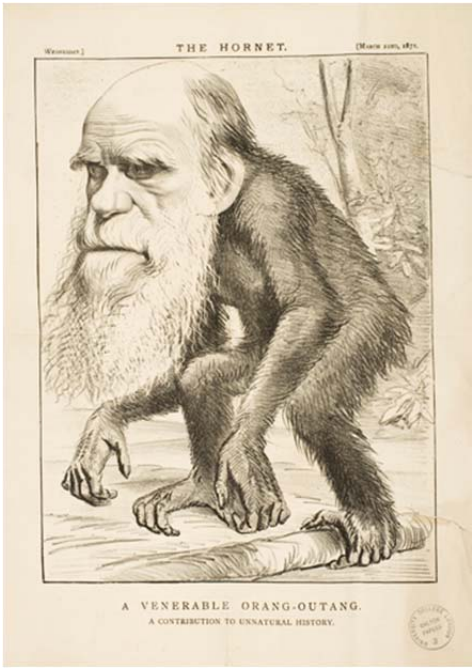


Figure 3. *'A Venerable Orang-Outang' in* The Hornet, *22 March, 1871.*[21]

Indeed, Professor Challenger suffers from something of the same phenomena as the story progresses, there are numerous comparisons between himself and the leader of the ape men. For instance, when Lord Roxton makes it back to camp after a mass kidnapping by the ape-men, he both warns Malone and presents him with an amusing mental spectacle:

> Then one of them stood out beside Challenger. […] This old ape-man – he was their chief – was a sort of red Challenger, with every one of our friend's beauty points, only just a trifle more so. He had the short body, the big shoulders, the round chest, no neck a great ruddy frill of a beard, the tufted eyebrows, the "What do *you* want, damn you!" look about the eyes, and the whole catalogue. When the ape-man stood by Challenger and pout his paw on his shoulder, the thing was complete. (p. 189)

Here the same sort of parody that plagued Darwin's public image is reflected onto the professor, in a much more concrete fashion – his strange double is standing next to him, with a hand touching his shoulder.

[21] UCL, '*The Hornet*: A Venerable Orang-Outang' http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/ucl-views/0809/orangutan [accessed 26/08/14]

Figure 4. *Professor Challenger and his double, illustration from* The Strand Magazine *instalments of* The Lost World*, by Harry Roundtree and Maple White, April, 1912. The comic brotherly touch of the bearded apes somewhat undermines the human party's peril.*[22]

It would be a much more unsettling display were it not for the comic value of the two apes side by side, one black, one red, and one supposedly more evolved than the other. There is only one marked difference, the shape of the skull:

> Only above the eyebrows, where the sloping forehead and low, curved skull of the ape-man were in sharp contrast to the broad brow and magnificent cranium of the European, could one see any marked difference. At every other point the king was an absurd parody of the professor. (p. 198)

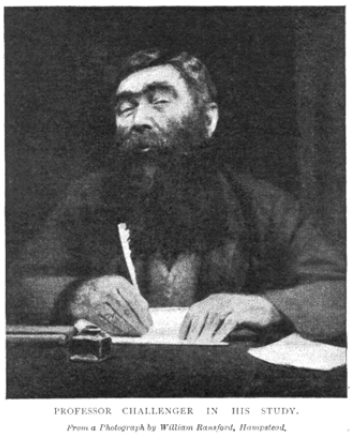


Figure 5. *'Professor Challenger in his Study', illustration from* The Strand Magazine *instalments of* The Lost World*, by Harry Roundtree and Maple White, April, 1912. Here Challenger displays his huge beard and heavy brow, very reminiscent of Darwin himself.*[23]

Clearly the European still has the upper hand when it comes to intelligence – we are shown that Challenger has the much bigger brain between the two, and yet, as exhibited earlier in the

[22] Forgotten Futures, 'Illustrations from *The Strand Magazine* instalments of *The Lost World*, 1912' http://www.forgottenfutures.com/game/ff3/lworld.htm [accessed 26/08/14]
[23] Forgotten Futures, 'Illustrations from *The Strand Magazine* instalments of *The Lost World*, 1912' http://www.forgottenfutures.com/game/ff3/lworld.htm [accessed 26/08/14]

chapter, the apes show a chilling intellect as they prepare their ambush under the cover of nightfall:

> Suddenly it rained apes […] They had been assemblin' in the dark […] before we knew where we were they had us spread-eagled on our backs. I call them apes, but they carried sticks and stones in their hands and jabbered talk to each other, and ended up by tyin' our hands with creepers, so they are ahead of any beast that I have seen in my wanderin's. Ape-men – that's what they are – Missin' Links, and I wish they had stayed missin'. (p. 188).

The apes show military tactics in their planned assault, they brandish weapons, and they are adept at using tools, albeit simple ones. All of these abilities would have been considered at the time as uniquely human qualities, with ape tool-use only really being understood in the Twenty-First Century. Thus, the combination of human qualities would have proven particularly frightening to his contemporary readers. There is also evidence of a language amongst the apes, showing clear methods of communication. Evidently Lord Roxton is one of the 'vulgar' people who considers such creatures missing links – and he humorously wishes that he'd never set sight upon the ape-men at all. However, for all their violent qualities, the ape-men display another human quality, the concern for and protection of a wounded fellow, shot in the gut by Lord Roxton himself: 'They carried off their wounded comrade – he was bleedin' like a pig – and then they sat around us, and if ever I saw frozen murder it was in their faces' (pp. 188-189). Although this compassion is somewhat eclipsed by the rank anger that Roxton views in their expressions, it seems more a humanoid hungering for revenge than simple animal aggression. This increased agitation amongst both parties – spurred on when the apes attempt to execute Professor Summerlee – eventually fuels a regression of sorts upon the party of white men, especially in the behaviour of the narrator:

> There are strange red depths in the soul of the most commonplace man. I am tender-hearted by nature, and have found my eyes moist many a time over the scream of a wounded hare. Yet the blood lust was on me now. I found myself on my feet emptying one magazine, then the other, clicking open the breech to re-load, snapping it to again, while cheering and yelling with pure ferocity and joy of slaughter as I did so. (p. 199)

Malone presents himself as a gentle-hearted soul, citing his empathy towards the hares hunted at home in Britain, due to the haunting quality of their screams – reminiscent of Ralph's squeamishness concerning the killing of monkeys in *The Gorilla Hunters* – but even he, an otherwise tender man, is stripped of this compassion in a moment. The violence of the ape-men awakens an ancestral ferocity in him, a blood lust, and a deep loathing. Like the Time Traveller, Malone expresses a deep desire to cause damage and death to the ape-men, perhaps an urge to wipe out this threatening reminder of our pasts in a similar vein to Norman Macleod's prayer for the gorilla's extinction. The men are thus stripped of their humanity, the very thing that supposedly separates them from the animals, overcome by pure violence, not a predatory instinct but rather the wanton pleasure of ending a life, something seldom found in the animal kingdom.

Novels like *The Lost World* began a genre that continued throughout the Twentieth Century, throwing together humans and prehistoric animals that otherwise would never have come into contact. This clashing of past and present captured the imagination of the public. Like *The Lost World*, apes began to make an increasing appearance in some shape or form – as wild animals, ape-men or cave-men – introducing a structure of evolution and race into the works. For instance, Edward Rice Burroughs's *The Land that Time Forgot* features civilised men again flung together with ape-men, and his later *Tarzan of the Apes* features a wild man (of white noble stock, orphaned in a ship-wreck) living with a tribe of fictional apes, similar to gorillas but more intelligent and understanding. The depiction of apes, however, is mixed at the best of times. This stirring of both civilised and wild men with apes and degenerated humans creates a sort of racial hierarchy between multiple species and races of humanity, and everything in-between. Early Hollywood began to populate its film landscapes with ape-men and savage tribes, and even the gorilla itself – the original ape-man – experienced a second wave of infamy, clutching struggling women in the same blatant display of sexuality that

haunted the orang-utan in illustrations and later adaptations of ‘Murders in the Rue Morgue’ and reminiscent of Frémiet’s sculpture. Issues of race abounded in these adaptations. Fears of black sexuality and the ravishment of white women were the backbone of these moving pictures, including the most famous of all, *King Kong* – a chilling clash between ancient and wild with modern technology – culminating in a violent showdown on the Empire State Building, Kong is ultimately slain by fighter planes.

However, racial fears and hierarchies that began with gorillas and other apes originated much earlier than Hollywood and even before Conan Doyle’s influence. A number of Nineteenth Century scholars and scientists, from just before the discovery of the gorilla to long after, began to structure the human race, often disagreeing on its origins and fine-points, but largely agreeing on one thing – the white man was at the top.

Chapter Three: The Inner Ape

The American novelist Jack London, best known for his depictions of the brutality of nature in *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*, wrote of his encounters with the people of London's East End docks on a night-time stroll, in his bleak non-fiction detailing London life, *The People of the Abyss*. Although detailing life in 1902 and published in 1903, the turn of the Twentieth Century, the Nineteenth Century figure of the gorilla still haunts London and its people in a deeply disturbing way. The fear of regression is still going forward, as London's inhabitants appear to be going backwards.

> …I was afraid of their hands, of their naked hands, as one may be afraid of the paws of a gorilla. They reminded me of gorillas. Their bodies were small, ill-shaped and squat. There were no swelling muscles, no abundant thews and wide-spreading shoulders. They exhibited, rather, an elemental economy of nature, such as cave-men must have exhibited. But there was strength in those meagre bodies, the ferocious, primordial strength to clutch and gripe and tear and rend. When they spring upon their human prey they are known even to bend the victim backward and double its body till the back is broken. They possess neither conscience nor sentiment, and they will kill for a half-sovereign, without fear or favour, if they are given half a chance. They are a new species, a breed of city savages. The streets and houses, alleys and courts, are their hunting grounds. As valley and mountain are to the natural savage, street and building are valley and mountain to them. The slum is their jungle, and they live and prey in the jungle.[24]

It seems London has a curious picture of the gorilla in his mind – since the people he describes have no real qualities reminiscent of the animals; their bodies are small, malformed, with no real musculature to speak of. Their behaviour also is predatory – London refers to them at one point as 'gutter-wolves' (p. 283) – not so much the defensive aggression of the gorilla, but the carnivorous aggression of hunters, of cave-men, missing links. However, the very fact that London associates these unsavoury characters with gorillas says more about the Nineteenth Century attitude towards the gorilla than it does about them – it is seen as the ultimate insult, a deeply negative likeness. There is, admittedly, something ape-like about

[24] Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (London: Ford Press, 2011) pp. 283-284. All further references will be given in the main body of the text.

London's depiction of the lower classes – but the wiry strength he describes and the tearing and rending they apparently display in their attacks on 'humans' appears more reminiscent of chimpanzees or something entirely fictional, rather than the gorilla's palpable force. Either way, London completely dehumanises these people – stripping them even of their humanity. Their prey is human – but not they, they are degenerative monsters evolved in a concrete jungle. London initially appears to paint them as semi-cannibalistic – after all they are not, in his eyes, human – but later it is revealed to be a case of violent muggings and assaults that he is attempting to colourfully describe. In either case, however, the people of the abyss are prepared to kill in their desperation to get what they need.

Indeed, London's view of the city's poorer areas and slums are rather confusing – he refers to it both as a jungle and an abyss. A jungle is a densely populated explosion of life forms – and while considered primeval, and hiding many dangers, it is on the whole a bustling environment. An abyss, on the other hand, is more a total void of life, more reminiscent of a deep-sea trench or the open recesses of space. It troubling, then, that the two come together in the capital city of London, a paradox of habitats. It is perhaps more an evolutionary abyss that Jack London refers to in this sense – a place where progress halts, and in some cases, begins to reverse, forming this 'breed of city savages', distinct from other human beings. London, despite acknowledging their hopeless situation and the system that has made them so, displays little pity and feels no kinship with these people, only a concern at the world seemingly devolving around him:

> London's encounter with these eldritch beings illustrates a key aspect of concern for the consequences of Britain's rapid urbanisation throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Moral and bodily degeneration is resulted in the arrival of 'a new species' that identifies gorillas not only as the proto-human embodiments of an animal ancestry, but also as the post-human form of devolution.[25]

[25] Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body*, pp. 149-150.

There is a sort of admission then, that like it or not, we do have something of the gorilla and other apes about us – our own selfish progress is, as London calls it, 'a man-killing machine', killing some completely, in others merely killing the human aspects of their beings – leaving the warped creatures of London's encounter. London ends this chapter, dramatically entitled 'A Vision of the Night', with a lament towards what the industrial system has done to humanity:

> If this is the best that civilisation can do for the human, then give us howling and naked savagery. Far better to be a people of the wilderness and desert, of the cave and the squatting-place, than to be a people of the machine and the Abyss. (p. 285)

London again gives us a converse image – there appears to be more nobleness in this 'howling and naked savagery' than the squalid desperation of the East End's lower classes. London prefers the concept of a return to our roots – a return to nature – than crushing cogs of oppression by his soulless machine. However, it is so easy to alienate the lower classes largely of London's own ethnic group (albeit not his nationality), it is easier still to alienate entirely different cultures. With the discovery of the gorilla lighting another fuse in the evolutionary debate and igniting again the theory that we might be a sophisticated form of ape, there began a scramble to create a racial hierarchy amongst human beings, using questionable scientific methods and thus resulting in 'scientific racism'. Among those that didn't totally reject the idea of human-ape ancestry, white Europeans and Americans were very keen to place themselves at the top of this pyramid, as far away from the chimpanzees, gorillas and orang-utans as possible.

Attempts to 'classify' the races and place white Europeans at the top of the chain began early in the Nineteenth Century. Amongst one of the first and most famous was French author and aristocrat Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau. He is frequently credited as the founder of modern racial demography, sparking the beginnings of true scientific racism in *The Inequality of Human Races*, a number of essays published from 1853 to 1855. While not

directly mentioned in the text, studies of the gorilla began early in France, 'which benefitted from trade agreements it had established with Gabon in 1839'.[26] The first complete skeleton of a female gorilla was to arrive in Paris in 1849, with more corpses to follow two years later – this time, full bodies, flesh and blood. As a result the French were some of the first Europeans to attempt to develop an understanding of the gorilla, placing the animal in the public consciousness. While the gorilla is never referenced in Gobineau's argument, it is clear that he views non-white people as not only inferior to white, but also closer to animals, more beast than human. Gobineau however, sought to prove that humanity in fact belonged to several species instead of one – portraying three fundamentally different genetic groups that came into being separately categorised in a loose sort of colour wheel – white, black, and yellow. Gobineau's theory predates Darwin's theories, so it is hardly in support of natural selection and evolution – but it does link certain sects of humanity with the bestial, thinning the lines between man and animal, albeit in a deeply negative and marginalised way. For example, Europeans are never compared to animals, but predictably the 'lesser' races range from reminiscent to almost one with the beasts. For instance, upon first discussing the physicality of the 'Mongol' Asian racial stereotype, Gobineau turns his descriptive gaze upon the black races of West Africa:

> From [the Asian] we turn to another – a negro from the West Coast of Africa, tall, strong-looking, with thick-set limbs and a tendency to fat. His colour is no longer yellowish, but entirely black; his hair no longer thin and wiry, but thick, coarse, woolly, and luxuriant; his lower jaw juts out, the shape of the skull is what is known as *prognathous*.

Here Gobineau turns a zoological eye to his fellow human, describing him as some strange animal. The hair, for example, is woolly – thought of more as the undercoat of an animal than the hair on a human's head. While strong and statuesque in some ways, Gobineau's West African displays notable genetic weaknesses – a predilection for weight gain and a skull

[26] Gott, Weir, *Gorilla* (p. 35).

displaying prognathism, or an ‘underbite’. In later examples of scientific racism, this prognathism and overall skull shape would be cited repeatedly against African, Australasian and Caribbean peoples, projecting their skulls between European and ape, or as an ape entirely. The closer the black man to the ape, the easier for white men to justify their treatment of them – as mere animals, another creature to be exploited.

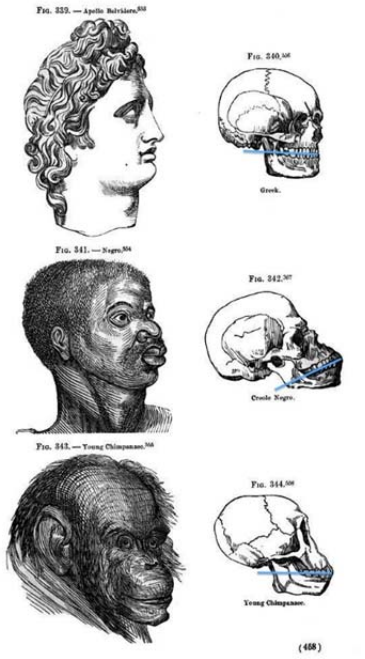


Figure 6. *Ethnographic woodcut from* Indigenous Races of The Earth, or, New Chapters of Ethnological Enquiry *by Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, 1857. Displays clear hierarchy from orthognathous classical Greek reconstruction to prognathous negro and juvenile chimpanzee.*[27]

Gobineau gives a hint of this in his further analysis of the West African, speaking of the sense of primal unease he gets when viewing the African’s physiological structure – reminiscent to him of an animal further along the evolutionary chain still:

> When we look for a moment at an individual of this type, we are involuntarily reminded of the structure of the monkey, and are inclined to admit that the negro races of West Africa come from a stock that has nothing in common, except the human form, with the Mongolian’ (pp. 106-107).

[27] The Subversive Archaeologist, ‘Are There Human Races? The Evolutionary Biology – Or Not – Of Race’ http://www.thesubversivearchaeologist.com/2013/05/are-there-human-races-evolutionary.html [accessed 02/08/14]

Although the term ‘ape’ and ‘monkey’ mean today completely different zoological classes of primates, the terms were largely interchangeable during earlier periods, and are still frequently confused today. However, the comparison with an arguably even lower life form is particularly insulting. It appears that in demonstrating the physical differences between African and Mongolian, Gobineau insinuates that the African’s ‘stock’ comes directly from the monkeys and apes that dwell in the country’s forests.

Gobineau’s opinion of the African is lenient however, in comparison to the aboriginal peoples of Australasia – he seems to hold a particularly strong reaction of disgust towards them, almost refusing to acknowledge them as humans at all:

> Oceana [*sic*] has the special privilege of providing the most ugly, degraded, and repulsive specimens of the race, which seem to have been created with the express purpose of forming a link between man and the brute pure and simple. By the side of many Australian tribes, the African negro himself assumes a value and dignity, and seems to derive from a nobler source. In many of the wretched inhabitants of this New World, the size of the head, the extreme thinness of the limbs, the famished look of the body are absolutely hideous. The hair is flat or wavy, and generally woolly, the flesh is black on a foundation of grey. (p. 107)

Here Gobineau’s summary is particularly vicious – it loses some of its zoological tone that it displayed when describing the West African man, although it gains no sympathy instead, quite the opposite – it is a deeply scathing description of a people that the author clearly finds revolting. The Australian people are compared to the lowest form of humanity, scarcely human, a missing link between brute and man. The otherwise frank physical description that follows is punctured with sentimentalised words to warp the aboriginal body into something disturbing to the reader. Even the flesh – black, like the African’s – is an inferior sort of black, pasted onto an unpalatable grey base.

We find these disturbing racial descriptions shadowed in du Chaillu and Ballantyne’s depictions of the gorillas – much of each narrator’s unease, disgust and sense of superiority is in check with Gobineau’s style, an unfortunate coincidence formed by a united front of

European and white supremacy and imperialistic attitudes that were especially prevalent throughout the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. The faces of gorillas are repeatedly described as 'intensely black' and appear to exhibit the same seemingly undesirable colour palette as Gobineau's people, blacks and browns and greys. Indeed, this very phrase appears in both Ballantyne and du Chaillu's later publication, *Stories of Gorilla Country*:

> The face of this gorilla was intensely black. The vast chest, which proved his great power, was bare, and covered with a parchment-like skin. His body was covered with gray hair. While the animal approached us in its fierce way, walking on its hind legs and facing us as few animals dare face man, it really seemed to me to be a horrid likeness of man.[28]

This statement is almost repeated in Ballantyne's earlier novel, a strange case of du Chaillu perhaps borrowing influence from Ballantyne in the writing of his children's story, where Ballantyne drew so often from du Chaillu's original, adult account:

> The body of this brute was covered with grey hair, but the chest was bare and covered with tough skin, and its face was intensely black. I shuddered as I looked upon it, for there was something terribly human-like about it, despite the brutishness of its aspect.[29]

Both du Chaillu and Ballantyne emphasise the blackness of the gorilla; an uncanny doubling between the ape and the black man, both troubling to the white sensibility. There is a troubling triangle here, between gorilla, black man and white man, with the white man struggling to justify his place at the top, often deluding himself and dehumanising the black man to push the figure of the gorilla further and further away. If the white man must eventually admit that the gorilla is a relative of sorts, then is it not better to paint other races as closer to the beast, inferior, and thus rendering the white man as the pinnacle of human evolution? The answer during the Nineteenth Century was a resounding yes. Ballantyne's book in particular is prevalent with racism: 'The Gorilla Hunters is among Ballantyne's most belligerently racist novels with African peoples depicted regularly and aggressively as

[28] Du Chaillu, *Stories of Gorilla Country*, p. 276.
[29] Ballantyne, *The Gorilla Hunters*, p. 131

'niggers' with the white European installed seemingly without question on a higher rung of the evolutionary ladder.'[30]

This sense of racism was deeply ingrained amongst the people of the Nineteenth Century. Even people instrumental to the understanding of the gorilla came under fire because of it. Paul du Chaillu himself became a target of scientific racism in order to discredit his findings, despite his attempts to separate himself from his African acquaintances. In a passage explored previously in Chapter One, du Chaillu's 'Fighting Joe' displays a particular vehemence towards his African captors:

> The negroes could not come near him at all without setting him in a rage. He seemed always to remember that they captured him, and to think he had experienced rather too hard treatment at their hands; but he evidently always cherished toward me also a feeling of revenge. (p. 201)

Though by no means immune to the gorilla's wrath, there is a clear distinction that the ape makes between du Chaillu and the 'negroes'. Although revenge is aimed at both, the gorilla's treatment of his African captors is supposedly much more severe. However, much like the blurring between gorilla and human, du Chaillu's conflicted relationship with the Africans also blurs the lines between race – later in the book, du Chaillu laughingly recalls a moment during a hunt when he 'blacks up' to go hunting with a piece of charcoal, and is praised by a seemingly incredulous African companion:

> As for me, I had also made extra preparations. I had blackened my face and hands with powdered charcoal and oil; and my blue drilling shirt and trowsers and black shoes made me as dark as any of them. My revolvers hung at my side, with my ammunition bag and brandy flask; my rifle lay upon my shoulder. All this excited the admiration of the crowd which assembled to see us go out.
>
> Quengueza was greatly delighted, and exclaimed, "What kind of ntangani (white man) is this? He fears nothing; he cares for neither sun nor water; he loves nothing but the hunt." (p. 262)

His love of hunting and utter disregard for his environment appears to set du Chaillu aside from other white Europeans, as is summarised by his companion – and while this is certainly

[30] Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body*, p. 131.

meant as a compliment, and included by du Chaillu in his works to bolster his impressive reputation, it also serves as a damaging comparison to what European and American society thought of as inferior people. As a result, around this time du Chaillu was suffering from racism used as a tool by his critics to pull apart his supposed works of fact and write them off as sensational fiction written by a man of uncertain origins – it was of the Nineteenth Century belief that non-white people were more emotive and exaggerated. His mysterious parentage served as a weapon against which du Chaillu had little defence – despite his claims to French, French-American, or American. These racist accusations also, in the eyes of his critics, brought him closer to the animals he hunted – if he himself had African blood, surely he was but a shadow away from the apes. The doubling of apes and Africans was extremely prevalent during the period, and this made du Chaillu's possibly mixed heritage seem all the more uncanny given his pursuits. Just as du Chaillu confused the gorilla with man, so too did his critics confuse him with his quarry. Indeed, American naturalist George Ord gave voice to his suspicions in a letter to a close friend, Charles Waterton:

> Some members of our Academy, who saw Du Chaillu, when he was here, say that the conformation of his head, give evidence of a spurious origin, the offspring of an African and a European; and a photograph of him which I have seen should seem to confirm this opinion. If it be a fact that he is a mongrel or a mustee, as the mixed race are termed in the West Indies, then we may account for his wondrous narrative; for I have observed that it is a characteristic of the negro race, and their admixtures, to be affected by habits of romance.[31]

Ord's letter uses a loosely scientific standpoint to back his argument – citing the shape of du Chaillu's skull to cast doubts upon his solely European heritage, and mentioning photographic evidence. However his tone shifts into something more personal immediately afterwards, Ord speaking from his own opinion that 'negroes' and people with this mixed heritage seem to display a penchant for the over dramatic. In an environment full of colonial and evolutionary anxiety, accusations like Ord's could have proved very damaging indeed. It

[31] George Ord, Unpublished letter to Charles Waterton, 20 October 1861 (Philadelphia: Unpublished, 1861)

didn't assist du Chaillu's credibility that *Stories of the Gorilla Country* was essentially a more dramatized, emotive re-write of his earlier *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, aimed at children. It is this contradiction between fact and fiction that made du Chaillu a charlatan to his critics, nothing more than a mysterious, jumped-up showman masquerading as a would-be scientist. Frequently they would attempt to discredit his writing, pulling out seemingly questionable behavioural descriptions. Ord's friend and fellow du Chaillu naysayer, Waterton, wrote in the *Gardener's Chronical:*

> Satisfied in my own mind (after having paid attention to the monkey family for upwards of half a century) that apes pass their lives in trees, I am astonished to learn that the veritable ape which Mr Du Chaillu fell in with during his travels should always have been roaming at large over the ground. I come to the conclusion that he must have been labouring under some ocular delusion, and that he saw phantoms.[32]

Waterton's comments, however, are somewhat ill-founded – despite his claims to know the primate family well, gorillas are not members of the monkey family at all, and du Chaillu's remarks upon the great ape's mobility is in fact, correct – proving that at least some of what he documented actually happened. Waterton's vision of the gorilla as a nimble, arboreal primate is without foundation – while gorillas can certainly climb, they are too heavy and cumbersome to live a tree-top existence, thus making them a predominantly ground-dwelling species.[33] Gorillas also 'knuckle-walk', allowing them to retain their long, grasping fingers for climbing and manipulating objects, but making them perfectly adept at moving along on the ground, where they spend the majority of their time. Although we can now vindicate many of du Chaillu's original observations of gorilla behaviour as fact, his uncertain racial heritage branded him as both barbaric, and a liar. There is also some uncomfortable terminology in Waterton's account – the fact that du Chaillu 'fell in with' the gorillas –

[32] Charles Waterton, 'The Gorilla', *The Gardener's Chronical and Agricultural Gazette 1861*, 15 June 1861, p. 566.
[33] Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000) p. 521.

seeming to suggest that du Chaillu's mixed race background eases him into gorilla society as easily as if he were an ape himself.

Charles Darwin, the founder of evolutionary theory, had his own theories of human structure, which came into light with his *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex.* Darwin thought that all men belonged to the same species and the same progenitor, whilst acknowledging their physical differences:

> …the Negro and the European, are so distinct that, if specimens had been brought to a naturalist without any further information, they would undoubtedly have been considered by him as good and true species. Nevertheless all the races agree in so many unimportant details of structure and in so many mental peculiarities, that these can be accounted for only through inheritance from a common progenitor; and a progenitor thus characterised would probably have deserved to rank as man.[34]

Darwin's view appears remarkably progressive – he acknowledges that, although physical differences between races may be great, shared cultural attributes draw us together and suggest we belong to the same ancestors, which Darwin hypothetically traces back, through the great apes, all the way back to simple, ancient lemur-like primates. Darwin's publication supposedly stems from a rank opposition to slavery, and indeed, Darwin was staunchly against it – but even he acknowledges a sort of hierarchy between the human races. He views white Europeans – civilized society – as the peak of human evolution, denouncing certain races as 'savages'. He even uses the brutality of these people to illustrate why white Europeans should not feel ashamed of their animal ancestry – suggesting that, in elaborate scenarios, certain monkey species seem to have more honour than some uncivilised people:

> He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part, I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs – as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers his bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his

[34] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Appledon & Company, 1871) p. 371. All further references will be given in the main body of the text.

> wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions. (pp. 386 – 387).

Darwin presents the 'savage' in an extremely negative light, displaying them as twisted, merciless peoples, with as little humanity in their behaviour as the ape-men or the Morlocks – indeed, these people appear to be less noble than monkeys, whom Darwin paints in an anthropomorphised and agreeable manner, in stark contrast to the total alienation the humans suffer in this description. If Darwin, a supposed champion of anti-slavery, could display such an intolerance to the idea of the 'savage', it is hardly surprising that the Nineteenth Century's scientific racism carried on largely unchallenged, right into the Twentieth Century. The culmination of this systematic racism was a phenomena often touted as the human zoo – the display of different ethnical groups for white audiences, much as animals are today. Human beings were even displayed in the same establishments or enclosures as animal species. Entire families were captured and trafficked into captivity, with as many rights as the gorillas also being sold to zoological establishments. The German animal collector Carl Hagenbeck, who supplied zoos and circuses all over the world with exotic animals, even turned his hand to human trafficking. These humans were often exhibited with animals from their continent, displayed together to form a coherent ecosystem in the eyes of the exhibition curators.

Figure 7. *'Carl Hagenbeck's Galla-Truppe', postcard from Hamburg Zoo, Spiegel Online. Here a group of Oromo people from Ethiopia, pose next to Grévy's Zebras.*[35]

However, the display of these ethnic groups brought about little education, focus was instead on the exotic nature of the people, more akin to a freak-show: 'little importance was attached to their knowledge of skills, but rather to the scrutiny of their gestures, their distinctive bodies and behaviours, which were invariably exotic but not always wild.'[36] As much as exhibitors sought to tout these people as savages, their behaviour often fell short of the wild expectations of the general public, not quite the 'savage in his native land' that Darwin envisioned. However, this could be remedied in some cases. In the beginnings of the Twentieth Century, one human exhibit at the Brooklyn Zoo particularly demonstrated this dichotomy between civilisation and savagery. Ota Benga, a Congolese 'pygmy', was displayed in the chimpanzee and monkey houses in September 1906. His exhibitor, Samuel

[35] Speigel Online, 'Europe's Human Zoos': http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/europe-s-human-zoos-remains-of-indigenous-abductees-back-home-after-130-years-a-671759.html [accessed 20/09/14]
[36] Luis A. Sanchez-Gomez, 'Human Zoos or Ethnic Shows? Essence and contingency in Living Ethnological Exhibitions' in *Culture & History Digital Journal*, 2 (2013) http://eprints.ucm.es/24083/1/Human_Zoos_or_Ethnic_Shows.pdf [accessed 21 September 2014] p. 4.

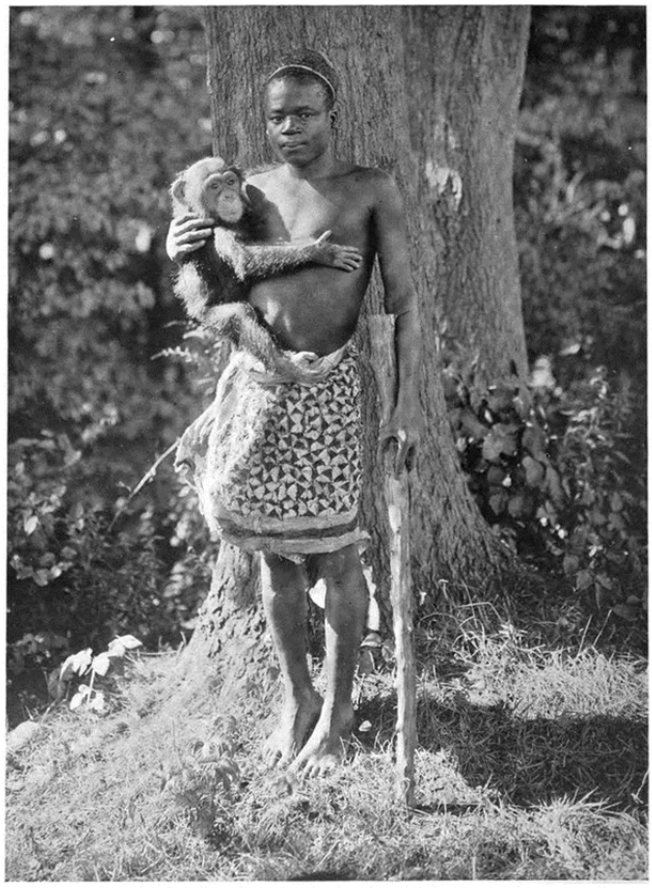
Verner, became worried that the general public may start to pity the lonely man behind bars, and combatted this with an injection of savagery: 'Verner portrayed Benga as a "cannibal" who only seemed sad because he was unable to eat human flesh'.[37] In order to supplant this in the public's mind, Verner had zookeepers plant 'bones throughout Benga's cage' (p. 137) and instructed him to 'run wildly, mouth open, toward the crowd' (p.137). This desperate attempt to portray an artificial wildness says more about Verner and those like him than the supposedly savage men – they were keen to suppress any human connection, setting up their subjects as little more than animals, justifying their place behind bars. The fact that a black man was being exhibited with apes in a zoo did not entirely go unnoticed by African Americans, one of which, the Reverend James Gordon, was justifiably outraged by both the man's treatment and the implication that the black man was in the position to be displayed with apes as a whole:

> We are frank enough to say that we do not like this exhibition of one of our race with the monkeys. Our race, we think, is depressed enough without exhibiting one of us with the apes. We think we are worthy of being considered human beings, with souls.[38]

A reasonable enough request, one might think, from one human being to another. Gordon's statement sums up perfectly the shameful treatment of black people at the hands of white Europeans and Americans, from Gobineau's talk of skull-structures and his revulsion of certain black ethnicities, to Ballantyne's 'niggers', du Chaillu's criticised and uncertain origins and Darwin's own issues with savagery, ultimately culminating in the unpalatable human zoos, a shameful history that Europe and America are keen to forget about. The proximity between ape and man that naturalists identified in early accounts of the gorilla not only affected gorillas and the way Europeans and Americans saw themselves, but also in the

[37] Lindsey B. Churchill, 'What Is It? Difference, Darwin, and the Victorian Freak Show' in *Darwin in Atlantic Cultures: Evolutionary Visions of Race, Gender and Sexuality*, eds. Jeannette Eileen Jones, Patrick Sharp (New York: Routledge, 2010) p. 137.
[38] 'Negro Ministers Act to Free Pygmy', *The New York Times*, 11 September 1906, p. 2, col. 1-2.

way they treated different ethnic groups. This huge period of scientific racism is perhaps the most regrettable of the gorilla's influences on humanity – although, naturally, the blame lies fully with those who sought to use their primate relatives to dehumanize entire peoples. The gorillas – although historically presented as bearing many faults – are certainly not guilty of this.



AFRICAN PYGMY, OTA BENGA AND CHIMPANZEE
From a photograph made in 1906 in the Zoological Park, New York City
1378

Figure 8. *Ota Benga, displayed here with a young chimpanzee at Brooklyn Zoo, 1906.*[39]

[39] Encyclopedia Virginia, 'On This Day' http://blog.encyclopediavirginia.org/2013/03/20/this-day-a-day-in-the-zoo-edition/ [accessed 22/09/14]

Conclusion

No other animal, then, has had quite the same effect on humanity as the gorilla. Many animals have changed the landscape of the earth irrevocably, usually under the guidance of human hands – but no animal has affected the human race in the same way. Even the other great apes – orang-utans, chimpanzees and bonobos – have not captured the imagination like the gorilla did upon its world-wide discovery. It became the hot topic of over half a century. It frightened, awed and entranced its Nineteenth and Twentieth Century audiences. It became the great white hunter's grand prize, shouldering aside other magnificent and dangerous animals like lions and elephants as the target of choice, a foe worthy of only the bravest men. It became a symbol of potent and raw sexuality – such as the partly-misconstrued sculpture of Frémiet and the much later depictions that saw the gorillas as the villains of a great many stories and films. It was also a symbol of brute strength, or almost indescribable power – but most importantly of all, it had a long and lasting impression on the human psyche, for better or for worse. It inspired the creation of monsters and men alike. It set in motion both a better understanding of human evolution and a regrettable structure of racial hierarchies, which would see gorillas and various ethnic groups of humanity behind bars, sometimes in the same establishments. No animal has had such a colossal effect on the human species, and likely nor will one, ever again. Although sometimes contested, scientists in the Twenty First Century largely agree that bonobos and chimpanzees are our closest living relatives, followed by gorillas and orang-utans, but for some reason none of the other apes have had quite the same result on human history. Perhaps the gorilla's size and strength made humans categorize them as higher beings over other apes, a slightly more flattering comparison after the initial horror of considering these creatures our relatives, or perhaps it is merely the mystery of the animal – the elusiveness of it, the secluded nature of its habitats, it's surrounding in myth and legend. And the gorilla's influence on mankind is not necessarily always a thing of the past – in

Kinshasa, situated in the Republic of Congo, young men calling themselves '*bakumbusu* (sing. *mukumbusu*), which means 'gorillas"[40] still draw influence from them even today. These men take their ideal of the gorilla to the extreme – even mimicking their behaviour:

> During training sessions and fights, the *bakumbusu* imitate gorillas in their ferocious way of fighting, and even in the sounds they utter. Bending through the knees, bringing the upper body slightly forward, with arms hanging next to the body, and imitating gorilla sounds, a *mukumbusu* shows he is about to start a fight.[41]

This kind of infatuation with the gorilla's physical prowess displays a longing to embody some of the immense strength that the animals are capable of wielding: 'Practitioners of these fighting styles […] admire the ferocious, ruthless and uncompromising behaviour of these animals, and long to obtain the power and strength that these animals display.'[42]

As charismatic and strong as the gorilla is, however, a sad result of all this publicity and intrigue has led to the near destruction of their species. Hunting for sport, deforestation and hunting for bush meat, the pet trade, and capture for zoos and circuses, tourism and cross-species diseases have all combined to form a considerable assault on the gorilla's numbers. Unfortunately, even with an increased understanding of gorillas and conservation efforts, these damaging phenomena are still in effect today – scientists speculate that a further five percent of the western lowland gorilla population is wiped out yearly by poaching.[43] Even gorilla tourism – supposedly a force for good – is controversial. Conservation bodies like WWF urge people to visit the gorillas in their natural habitat [44] – not only giving people that otherwise might never encounter their wild relatives a chance to share a connection with them, but also increasing funding for local people and conservation efforts. But naturalists are

[40] Katrien Pype, 'Fighting Boys, Strong Men and Gorillas: Notes on the Imagination of Masculinities in Kinshasa' in *Africa*, issue 77, 2007) p. 250.
[41] Pype, 'Fighting Boys, Strong Men and Gorillas', p. 252.
[42] Pype, 'Fighting Boys, Strong Men and Gorillas', p. 253.
[43] WWF, 'Western Lowland Gorilla' http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/great_apes/gorillas/western_lowland_gorilla/ [accessed 21/09/14]
[44] WWF, 'Western Lowland Gorilla' http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/great_apes/gorillas/western_lowland_gorilla/ [accessed 21/09/14]

divided on the subject – the famous Dian Fossey abhorred the tourist trade. Her violent death is most commonly attributed to angry poachers, but conspiracy theories sprang up too, whispers that Fossey was in fact murdered by people with links to the tourist trade that she fought to suppress.[45] Either way, gorilla tourism brings foreign humans into close contact with apes whose immune systems are unaccustomed to the same threats as theirs – and the risk of cross-species contamination is high. The common cold alone can kill a gorilla[46]. The Ebola virus, something that has hit outbreak level on contemporary news channels, not only effects humans – it is spreading through gorilla populations with devastating effect.[47] Once again our closeness proves to be the gorilla's undoing – although Ebola originated organically, carried by bats, other diseases carried by foreign human visitors can potentially wipe out isolated gorilla populations, so easy is cross-species infection among the great apes – and diseases like Ebola can be spread by either party, making the risk considerable for all involved.

Despite the damage we still cause – sometimes accidentally – to the gorilla, with our increased understanding of genetics, our closeness can no longer be ignored – and with new understanding of the gorilla genome it appears we are even more closely related than we initially thought – around 98% identical.[48] They are amongst our closest relatives, even amongst the apes – overshadowed only by the chimpanzee species, but only fractionally. We can no longer feign ignorance, or case the gorilla as a monster or a missing-link. Even our smaller relatives, the monkeys that Ralph pitied and the flesh of which du Chaillu abhorred, are closer than we think: 'All of the great apes and humans differ from rhesus monkeys, for

[45] Crime Library, 'Dian Fossey: Life and Death' http://www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/celebrity/dian_fossey/19.html [accessed 22/09/14] p. 20
[46] Gorilla Doctors, 'Gorilla Health Threat: Infectious Disease' http://gorilladoctors.org/saving-lives/monitoring-interventions/infectious-disease.html [accessed 22/09/14]
[47] Animal Research: Medical Advances, 'Ebola Vaccine and Western Gorillas' http://www.animalresearch.info/en/medical-advances/114/ebola-vaccine-western-gorillas/ [accessed 22/09/14]
[48] National Geographic, 'Gorillas More Closely Related to People Than Thought, Genome Says': http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/03/120306-gorilla-genome-apes-humans-evolution-science/ [accessed 23/09/14]

example, by about 7% in their DNA'.[49] Even the gap between men and monkeys is humbling. Perhaps it is time to treat other primates with the compassion we ourselves expect. After all – we are family.

[49] Smithsonian Institute, 'Human Origins': http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/genetics [accessed 30/07/14]

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Appendix

Figure 1. Emmanuel Frémiet, *Gorilla carrying off a Negress*, 1859. Constructed from plaster, greater than life-size (destroyed in 1861). Although modelled on a female gorilla, the animal was frequently misconstrued as male. National Gallery of Victoria, 'Stowed Away: Emmanuel Frémiet's *Gorilla carrying off a woman*' http://publications.ngv.vic.gov.au/artjournal/stowed-away-emmanuel-fremiets-gorilla-carrying-off-a-woman-2/#.VCIOqPldVSE [accessed 12/09/14]

Figure 2. 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' by David Vierge, showing an ape much more gorilla than orang-utan committing the act of murder with a razor blade. Deadly Kingdom, 'Poe's Orang-utans Illustrations' http://deadlykingdom.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/poes-orangutans-illustrations.html [accessed 24/08/14]

Figure 3. 'A Venerable Orang-Outang' in The Hornet, 22 March, 1871. UCL, 'The Hornet: A Venerable Orang-Outang' http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/ucl-views/0809/orangutan [accessed 26/08/14]

Figure 4. Professor Challenger and his double, illustration from The Strand Magazine instalments of The Lost World, by Harry Roundtree and Maple White, April, 1912. The comic brotherly touch of the bearded apes somewhat undermines the human party's peril. 'Illustrations from The Strand Magazine instalments of The Lost World, 1912' http://www.forgottenfutures.com/game/ff3/lworld.htm [accessed 26/08/14]

Figure 5. 'Professor Challenger in his Study', illustration from The Strand Magazine instalments of The Lost World, by Harry Roundtree and Maple White, April, 1912. Here Challenger displays his huge beard and heavy brow, very reminiscent of Darwin himself. 'Illustrations from The Strand Magazine instalments of The

Figure 6. Ethnographic woodcut from Indigenous Races of The Earth, or, New Chapters of Ethnological Enquiry by Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, 1857. Displays clear hierarchy from orthognathous classical Greek reconstruction to prognathous negro and juvenile chimpanzee. The Subversive Archaeologist, 'Are There Human Races? The Evolutionary Biology – Or Not – Of Race' http://www.thesubversivearchaeologist.com/2013/05/are-there-human-races-evolutionary.html [accessed 02/08/14]

Figure 7. 'Carl Hagenbeck's Galla-Truppe', postcard from Hamburg Zoo, Spiegel Online. Here a group of Oromo people from Ethiopia, pose next to Grévy's Zebras. Speigel Online, 'Europe's Human Zoos': http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/europe-s-human-zoos-remains-of-indigenous-abductees-back-home-after-130-years-a-671759.html [accessed 20/09/14]

Figure 8. Ota Benga, displayed here with a young chimpanzee at Brooklyn Zoo, 1906. Encyclopedia Virginia, 'On This Day' http://blog.encyclopediavirginia.org/2013/03/20/this-day-a-day-in-the-zoo-edition/ [accessed 22/09/14]